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PATENT APPLICATION

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Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of Inventor(s):

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Patrick CurranFor: **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR REDUCING ENGINE CYCLING IN HYBRID ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

Enclosed are:

- ☒ 2 sheet(s) of drawings
☒ Assignment and Cover Sheet
☒ Information Disclosure Statement, PTO Form 1449, and Copies of Citations
☐ A certified copy of

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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR REDUCING
ENGINE CYCLING IN HYBRID ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Technical Field

5 This invention relates in general to hybrid motor vehicles operable by either an electric motor or a liquid fuel powered internal combustion engine and, in particular, to a method and system for reducing the cycling of the engine during non-propulsive operations.

Background Art

10 For various reasons, including environmental reasons, it is desirable to provide automotive vehicles that operate with propulsion systems other than the typical internal combustion engine. One such propulsion system contemplated is a purely electric vehicle.
15 However, because of well known problems associated with such electrical vehicles, combining the electric drive with a somewhat more conventional internal combustion engine is one alternative being considered. A vehicle with such an alternative propulsion system is generally referred to as a hybrid motor vehicle.
20

A hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) is generally described as a motor vehicle with a main power unit (HPU) which converts fuel energy to electric and/or mechanical energy, and a bidirectional energy storage
25 system (ESS), usually electrical. The main power unit may be a piston engine, gas turbine, fuel cell or the like, while the energy storage system may be a battery, flywheel, capacitor or the like.

Motive power to drive the vehicle, as demanded by the driver, is drawn from a combination of these two sources. The essential elements of a hybrid vehicle powertrain include an HPU, an electric traction
5 motor-generator, and an ESS. Various hybrid configurations add HPU and ESS power in different places in the system.

The emissions that occur at engine startup are at a high level due to the fact that the air/fuel ratio
10 is not accurately determined on startup and the catalytic converter is usually cold (unless it is electrically heated). Upon startup, initial emissions are high due to low catalyst efficiency until the catalyst temperature is stabilized. It is, therefore,
15 desirable to limit the frequency of engine starts in a given drive cycle. Emissions are much lower if the engine is requested to remain on for a short extended period beyond driver demand (accelerator) to satisfy ancillary requirements. During this extended run
20 period, the catalyst is sufficiently hot from the ongoing combustion process to perform the catalytic action required to maintain low emissions.

Ancillary functions that require engine operation include, but are not limited to: brake
25 booster vacuum, fuel vapor purge, and passenger compartment heating or air conditioning. It is an object of the present invention to reduce the number of times that the engine or other main power unit is turned on solely for supporting non-propulsive or ancillary
30 functions to thereby enhance both fuel economy and reduce engine emissions.

Disclosure Of Invention

In accordance with the present invention, a method and system is provided that responds to non-propulsive needs of a hybrid vehicle by setting at least
5 two thresholds related to engine support: a first threshold to keep a running engine ON, and a second threshold to turn the engine ON from an OFF state. More particularly, a request is made that the engine not be turned OFF until the value of an auxiliary system
10 parameter exceeds the first threshold value and that the engine be turned ON if the parameter falls below the second threshold value. In other words, if the engine is OFF when the value of the parameter falls below the second threshold value, a request is made that the
15 engine be turned ON and whenever the engine is ON, a request is made that the engine be maintained ON until the parameter exceeds the first threshold value.

The logic expressed above will extend engine run time slightly but will reduce the frequency of
20 engine startups. This can be calibrated for a clear emissions improvement and a modest fuel economy improvement.

Brief Description Of Drawings

25 Figure 1 is a schematic block diagram of the system of the present invention; and

Figure 2 is a flowchart of the method of implementing the invention.

Best Mode For Carrying Out The Invention

Referring now to the drawings and initially to Figure 1, a series hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) 10 is illustrated. The HEV 10 contains a main power unit (HPU) 12, for example an internal combustion engine, which uses fuel from an onboard fuel tank 14 to generate electricity in a motor-generator (MG) 16 to power the vehicle 10. An energy storage system (ESS), such as a battery 18, is also used to power the vehicle alone or in combination with the HPU 12. A direct mechanical linkage, shown in dashed lines, may be included to provide a parallel configuration.

Both the HPU 12 and ESS 18 are under the control of a controller 20. Though not shown in detail the controller hardware is conventional and includes the usual components, such as a processor ("CPU"); input/output ports; an electronic storage medium or read-only memory containing processor-executable instructions and calibration values ("ROM"); random-access memory ("RAM"); "keep-alive" memory ("KAM"); and a data bus of any suitable configuration. While the controller will be discussed as a single computer, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that a plurality of processors or separate interconnected computers may be employed. As illustrated, the vehicle 10 contains a motor/transaxle 22 for delivering power from the HPU and ESS to the vehicle wheels 24. The proportion of the total motive demand power (MDP) power derived from the HPU and ESS depends upon the operational strategy method employed.

The controller 20 receives signals from a variety of sensors coupled to the unit 12 and/or the

vehicle and controls the operation of the unit 12 and various ancillary subsystems. The sensors indicated in Figure 1 include an air charge temperature sensor 26 providing input to the controller 20 for controlling a purge subsystem 28, a vacuum sensor 30 providing input for controlling a brake and/or other vacuum operated subsystem generally indicated at 32, one or more temperature sensors 34 providing input for controlling a heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) subsystem generally indicated at 36, and a catalyst temperature sensor 38 providing input for monitoring catalyst efficiency. The aforementioned subsystems are illustrative only and not intended to limit the type of subsystems to which the invention may be applied.

Referring now to Figure 2, a flowchart depicting the method of the present invention is shown. A check is made at decision block 40 to determine if the engine is running, and if so, "ENGINE ON" thresholds are set at block 42. If all auxiliary systems are above their respective "ENGINE ON" thresholds as determined in block 44, then an engine ON flag is cleared at 46 which permits the engine to be turned OFF as dictated by other considerations. If the thresholds of any of the auxiliary systems are below their respective "ENGINE ON" thresholds, the engine ON flag is set at block 48. On the other hand, if the engine is OFF as determined at block 40, then the "ENGINE OFF" thresholds of the various subsystems are set at block 50. If any of the auxiliary systems are below their respective "ENGINE OFF" thresholds as determined in block 52, then the engine ON flag is set at block 48 which requests the engine be turned ON. If the thresholds of all of the auxiliary systems are above their respective "ENGINE

OFF" thresholds, the engine ON flag is cleared at block 46.

For example, in a brake booster vacuum subsystem, a request is made for the engine to remain ON until an upper threshold of, for example, 15 inches of Hg vacuum is reserved in the vacuum canister. Once this vacuum level is reached, the request is withdrawn and the engine may be turned OFF if no longer needed for other functions. If a lower threshold of, for example, 10 inches Hg is reached while the engine is OFF, the system requests that the engine be turned back ON. It is not anticipated that the engine would remain ON for a significant period for the sole purpose of achieving the upper vacuum threshold. It is, however, possible that one or two brake applies could occur during the engine OFF state without reaching the lower threshold, thereby avoiding unnecessarily turning the engine ON for those ancillary functions. The constraints on the calibration of these thresholds is that the "ENGINE ON" value should be low enough so as not to compromise component durability and the "ENGINE OFF" value should be high enough so as not to compromise safety. With these absolute outer boundaries, the thresholds should be as far apart as possible.

In the case of air conditioning, the temperature is cooled down a predetermined amount below the setpoint with the engine ON, for example 2° F, and the engine is then allowed to shut OFF. A request to turn the engine ON is not made until the setpoint is exceeded by a predetermined amount, for example 2° F. This 4° calibratable window or deadband will mitigate against the engine being turned ON unnecessarily. More specifically, if the A/C is set to a nominal value of

70°, the a/c compressor would remain ON until a temperature of 68° is reached, and a request is made that the engine remain ON until that temperature is reached. When the engine is OFF, a temperature of 72°
5 would be reached before a request is made that the engine be turned ON to support running the a/c compressor.

This logic is also used to provide a reduction in control of purge of fuel vapor while the engine is
10 not running (this level is also calibratable). Rather than a single threshold, engine turn-on is based on a plurality of conditions, including, but not limited to: ambient temperature, time since last engine run, duration of last engine run, and last recorded purge
15 vapor level while running. The objective is to characterize the fuel vapor being stored in the carbon canister as best as possible and to purge the vapor as completely as possible.

It is well known that a cool catalyst is
20 inefficient. Thus, when the engine is first turned ON and the catalyst is cold, emissions are relatively high until the exhaust heats the catalyst to a sufficient temperature to perform catalytic action. It is desirable to monitor the output of the catalyst
25 temperature model and maintain the engine ON for one temperature threshold and turn the engine ON at a lower threshold in order to improve emissions. This approach provides a cost savings over electrically heating the catalyst to maintain the proper catalyst temperature.

30 While the best mode for carrying out the invention has been described in detail, those familiar with the art to which this invention relates will recognize various alternative designs and embodiments

What Is Claimed Is:

1 1. A method of reducing the number of times
2 a main power unit of a hybrid electric vehicle is
3 activated to supply power to an auxiliary system of the
4 vehicle during a given drive cycle comprising a sequence
5 of the following steps:
6 determining the ON/OFF status of said unit;
7 if the unit is ON requesting that the unit be
8 maintained ON until the value of an auxiliary system
9 parameter exceeds a first threshold value; and
10 if the unit is OFF requesting that the unit be
11 turned ON when the value of said parameter falls below a
12 second threshold value.

1 2. A method of reducing the number of times
2 a main power unit of a hybrid electric vehicle is
3 activated to supply power to an auxiliary system of the
4 vehicle during a given drive cycle comprising a sequence
5 of the following steps:
6 determining the ON/OFF status of said unit;
7 determining whether the value of an auxiliary
8 system parameter is within or outside a window defined
9 by first and second threshold values;
10 requesting a change of status from OFF to ON
11 if the value of the parameter is outside said window and
12 greater than said second threshold value; and
13 requesting a change of status from ON to OFF
14 if the value of the parameter is outside said window and
15 greater than said first threshold value.

1 3. The method of Claim 1 wherein said first
2 threshold value is a unit ON auxiliary system threshold

3 value and said second threshold value is a unit OFF
4 auxiliary system threshold value and further comprises
5 the steps of:
6 setting said unit OFF auxiliary system
7 threshold value when the status of said unit is OFF; and
8 setting said unit ON auxiliary system
9 threshold value when the status of said unit is ON.

1 4. The method of Claim 1 wherein said main
2 power unit is a piston driven engine.

1 5. The method of Claim 1 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a brake booster vacuum system.

1 6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is an air conditioning and heating
3 system.

1 7. The method of Claim 1 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a purge vapor system.

1 8. The method of Claim 7 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a catalyst system.

1 9. The method of Claim 3 wherein said
2 vehicle includes a plurality of auxiliary systems and
3 said step of requesting that a unit ON status be
4 maintained is performed if a predetermined parameter in
5 any of said plurality of auxiliary systems is below
6 respective unit ON auxiliary system threshold values,
7 and said step of requesting a unit ON status is
8 performed if a predetermined parameter in any of said

9 plurality of auxiliary systems is below respective unit
10 OFF auxiliary system threshold value.

1 10. A system for reducing the number of times
2 a main power unit of a hybrid electric vehicle is
3 activated to supply power to an auxiliary system of the
4 vehicle during a given drive cycle comprising:

5 means determining the ON/OFF status of said
6 unit;

7 means requesting that the unit be maintained
8 ON until the value of an auxiliary system parameter
9 exceeds a first threshold value; and

10 means requesting that the unit be turned ON
11 when the value of said parameter falls below a second
12 threshold value.

1 11. The system of Claim 10 wherein said main
2 power unit is a piston driven engine.

1 12. The system of Claim 10 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a brake booster vacuum system.

1 13. The system of Claim 10 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is an air conditioning and heating
3 system.

1 14. The system of Claim 10 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a purge vapor system.

1 15. The system of Claim 14 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a catalyst system.

1 16. An article of manufacture comprising:
2 a computer storage medium having a computer program
3 encoded therein for reducing the number of times a main
4 power unit of a hybrid electric vehicle is activated to
5 supply power to an auxiliary system of the vehicle
6 during a given drive cycle, said computer storage medium
7 comprising:

8 code for determining the ON/OFF status of said
9 unit;

10 code for requesting that the unit be
11 maintained ON until the value of an auxiliary system
12 parameter exceeds a first threshold value; and

13 code for requesting that the unit be turned ON
14 when the value of said parameter falls below a second
15 threshold value.

1 17. The article of Claim 16 wherein said main
2 power unit is a piston driven engine.

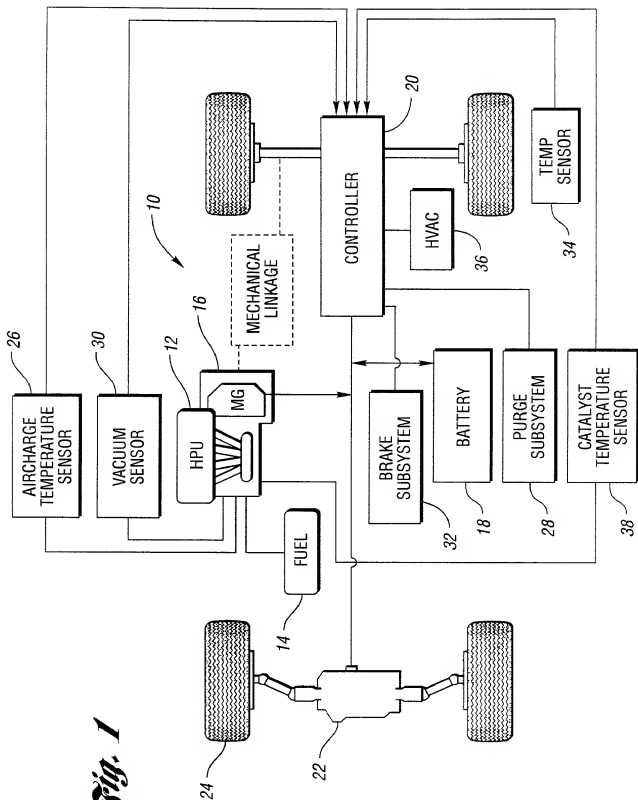
1 18. The article of Claim 16 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a brake booster vacuum system.

1 19. The article of Claim 16 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is an air conditioning and heating
3 system.

1 20. The article of Claim 16 wherein said
2 auxiliary system is a purge vapor system.

Abstract Of The Disclosure

Fig. 1



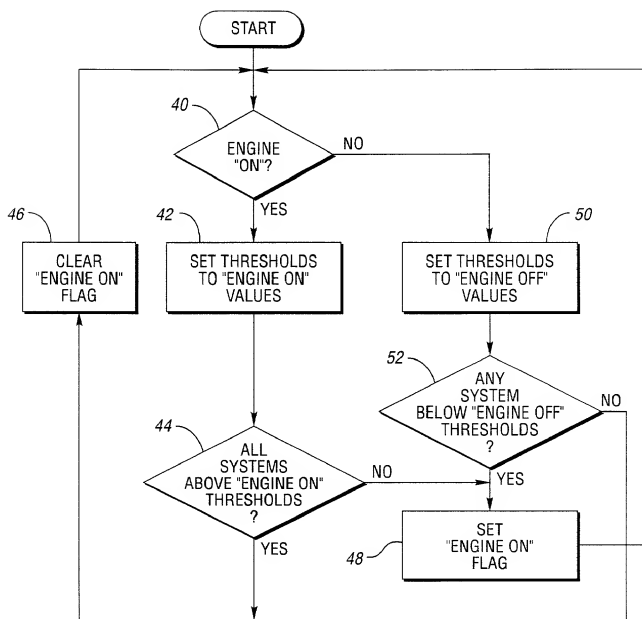


Fig. 2

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY - ORIGINAL APPLICATIONAttorney's Docket No.
200-0029

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;

I verily believe I am the original, first and sole inventor or an original, first and joint inventor of the subject matter that is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR REDUCING ENGINE CYCLING IN HYBRID ELECTRIC VEHICLES

the specification of which is attached hereto.

I have reviewed and understand the contents of the specification identified above, including the claims.

I acknowledge my duty to disclose information of which I am aware that is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Section 1.56(a), Title 37 of the Code of Federal Regulations; and

as to application for patents or inventor's certificate on the invention filed in any country foreign to the United States of America, prior to this application by me or my legal representatives or assigns,

☒ no such applications have been filed, or☐ such applications have been filed as follows

COUNTRY	APPLICATION NO.	DATE OF FILING (month, day, year)	DATE OF ISSUE (month, day, year)	PRIORITY CLAIMED UNDER 35 USC 119

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 of any United States application(s) or § 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR § 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application.

(Application Number) (Filing Date) (Status - patented, pending, abandoned)

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POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the United States Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith and to act on my behalf before the competent International Authorities in connection with any and all international applications filed by me. (List name and registration number)

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.

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